Durham Public Schools

High School Writing Across the Curriculum Initiative

Spring 2012

Why do we need to integrate writing into all classes?

1. Writing is a great way to assess student knowledge and skill.
2. Writing is an essential skill that students must master to be college and career ready.
3. Writing is a way for students to learn to express their ideas across content areas.
4. Writing is a way for students to clarify their thinking.
5. Writing is a way for students to develop and refine higher level thinking skills
6. Writing is power.

In all classes at all grade levels

Action Required:

1. Integration of writing to learn and writing to assess on a regular basis
2. Use Durham Public Schools writing rubrics to assess and provide feedback on student writing

Writing Across Content Areas Rubric-Grades 9-12

High School English Writing Rubric

English III & US History-

Due to changes in the North Carolina State Writing Assessment Program, all 11th grade students are required to take the ACT writing test in March 2012. In an effort to prepare students for the format and administration of this testing experience, English III and US history teachers are expected to integrate at least one practice writing test into their instruction before the ACT administration in March.

Action Required:

1. Choose a sample from the prompts provided by DPS OR create your own that closely mirrors the format and content of the sample prompts provided.
2. Administer practice on demand prompt in class before February 27, 2012.
3. Use Durham Public Schools writing rubrics to assess and provide feedback to students before March 2, 2012.

English 3 Sample Prompts

1. In some high schools, many teachers and parents have encouraged the school to adopt a dress code. Some teachers and parents support a dress code because they think it will improve the learning environment in the school. Other teachers and parents do not support a dress code because they believe it inhibits a student's individual expression. In your opinion, should high schools adopt dress codes for students?

*Source: The Real ACT Prep Guide, 2008*

1. A school board is concerned that the state’s requirements for core courses in mathematics,English, science, and social studies may prevent students from taking important elective courses like music, other languages, and vocational education. The school board would like to encourage more high school students to take elective courses and is considering two proposals. One proposal is to lengthen the school day to provide students with the opportunity to take elective courses. The other proposal is to offer elective courses in the summer. Write a letter to the school board in which you argue for lengthening the school day or for offering elective courses during the summer. In your opinion, which of these options is best for students?

*Source: www.act.org, 2009*

1. The Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) requires all school libraries receiving certain federal funds to install and use blocking software to prevent students from viewing material considered “harmful to minors.” However, some studies conclude that blocking software in schools damages educational opportunities for students, both by blocking access to Web pages that are directly related to the state-mandated curriculums and by restricting broader inquiries of both students and teachers. In your view, should the schools block access to certain Internet Web sites?

*Source: The Princeton Review’s Cracking the ACT, 2008*

1. Many communities are considering adopting curfews for high school students. Some educators and parents favor curfews because they believe it will encourage students to focus more on their homework and make them more responsible. Others feel curfews are up to families, not the community, and that students today need freedom to work and participate in social activities in order to mature properly. Do you think that communities should impose curfews on high school students?

*Source: The Princeton Review’s Cracking the ACT, 2008*

US History Sample Prompts

1. Ever since Eli Whitney’s invention of the cotton gin in the 1790s, the South had been on a completely different economic and social path from the North. In the 1850s, social and political developments, including the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the Fugitive Slave Act, Bleeding Kansas, the *Dred Scott* decision, and John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry, drove the regions further apart. Although the North and the South tried to reconcile their differences with major political compromises in 1820 and in 1850, both attempts failed. Were the North and the South doomed from the beginning to battle each other eventually over the slavery issue? In your opinion, was the Civil War inevitable?
2. Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis were very different wartime presidents. They both faced challenges and had to fight to overcome them. Who, in your opinion, was the better leader, and why?
3. Some historians have claimed that in many ways the Mexican War was the first round between the North and South in the Civil War. On one side were the Whigs and a growing number of abolitionists in the North, who were adamantly against letting slavery spread. Against them stood the entire South and a majority of Democrats, who believed that expanding slavery was essential to the survival of their economy and society. This debate became the major issue—really the only issue—during the next decade until the outbreak of the Civil War. Do you agree? Why or why not?